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Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 68/210, provides an update on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the preparations for the intergovernmental negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda, and the implementation of the resolution. The report highlights the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in reviewing the overall follow-up to the Conference in the context of the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. It also examines how coherence and synergies across the different functions of the forum can be achieved in order to best support the post-2015 development agenda. In particular, the report looks at the following functions: agenda-setting; follow-up and review of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits; national voluntary reviews; increasing transparency and strengthening civil society participation; strengthening the science-policy interface; promoting the coordination of sustainable development policies; and improving cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system on sustainable development programmes and policies.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides information on progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 68/210 on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. As preparations for the post-2015 development agenda proceed, it takes an integrated look at the status of the various processes set up for the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, with due consideration of the Assembly's call for coherence, synergy and mutual support among follow-up processes.

2. In this regard, the present report focuses on the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals; the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing; the General Assembly process to identify options for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies; and the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. Some of the processes have not yet concluded their work; the report provides an update of the various processes as at the beginning of August 2014.

3. The report also examines how the various functions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development can contribute to supporting the post-2015 development agenda.

4. The present report should be read in conjunction with other reports on sustainable development submitted to the General Assembly.

II. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

5. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), launched several intergovernmental processes. Several of those are to be concluded by September 2014 and will inform the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda that will start at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

A. High-level political forum on sustainable development

6. A critical outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was the establishment of a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum to follow up on the implementation of sustainable development.

7. In July 2013, the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/290, decided on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum.

8. The high-level political forum is a hybrid platform: it will meet every four years for two days under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of Heads of State and Government and every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council for eight days, including a three-day ministerial segment within the

high-level segment of the Council. It will replace the annual ministerial review of the Council in 2016.

9. The first and inaugural meeting of the high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly was held at the level of Heads of State and Government on 24 September 2013, while the second meeting of the forum (and the first under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council) was held from 30 June to 9 July 2014.

10. The meeting under the auspices of the General Assembly resulted in a summary by the President of the General Assembly (A/68/588), on an exceptional basis, as it was an inaugural meeting. The overall theme of the meeting was "Building the future we want: from Rio+20 to the post-2015 development agenda". The statements delivered during the meeting highlighted that it was within the present generation's reach to help the poor to break out of poverty, achieve universal human development and entrust a healthy planet to future generations.

11. The theme of the second meeting of the forum, and the first under the auspices of the Economic Council, was "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals".

12. In late 2013 and the first quarter of 2014, the regional commissions and their partners held a series of broad and inclusive consultations at the regional and subregional levels that fed into the forum. Those included regional meetings on sustainable development, explicitly designed as a preparatory process for the forum.[1]

13. The programme of the forum was organized around four tracks: (a) From the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to post-2015; (b) regional dimension and countries in special situations; (c) shaping the forum beyond 2015; and (d) science-policy interface. The meeting was also held in two parts: four days at the level of senior officials and a three-day ministerial segment as part of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council.

14. In the ministerial declaration adopted at the end of the three-day ministerial segment (E/HLS/2014/1), the ministers reiterated their commitment to establishing a strong, ambitious, inclusive and people-centred post-2015 development agenda. The declaration was also adopted by the Economic and Social Council. At the closing of the forum, the theme for the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in 2015 was adopted as follows: "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum after 2015".

15. The high-level political forum featured rich discussions that showed the great potential for integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and engaged Member States, the United Nations system, major groups and other stakeholders.

16. The main messages from the forum can be summarized as follows:

- There is a unique opportunity to craft a development agenda that can bring the world to a more sustainable and prosperous future. The high-level political forum for 2014 is being convened at a pivotal point when many different work

[1] See http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=1439&menu=35.

streams are being brought together to form this agenda, which should stand on the solid base set at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

- The new integrated development agenda needs to finish the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and address new challenges simultaneously. It should build on the foundations laid and experiences gained in the work towards achieving the Goals. It must focus on all three dimensions of sustainable development, address the underlying causes of poverty and address environmental degradation and unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

- Inclusiveness needs to be a defining characteristic of the new agenda, ensuring that no one is left behind either in developed or in developing countries. The sustainable development goals need to address inequalities, both within and between countries, beyond the traditional north-south divisions.

- In order to succeed, the new development agenda needs to be universal, that is, it must speak to all countries and citizens around the world and involve all the relevant actors in its implementation. A new global social contract, political will and mutual trust will be needed if the shared vision of a sustainable future is to be achieved.

- The high-level political forum will need to oversee the new development agenda and play an integral role in reviewing the implementation of the sustainable development goals. In this endeavour, the forum needs to integrate the international, regional and national levels and bring together all relevant actors and stakeholders. The forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council will conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

- A transformative agenda also requires the transformation of international cooperation for implementation. For the sustainable development goals to be achieved, the international community as a whole will have to carry the responsibility of striving towards them. At the same time, each country has to have the freedom to determine the size of its national contribution to the results.

- In addition to shared responsibility, fair burden sharing will be needed, and the question of provision of means of implementation will be crucial for the implementation of the sustainable development goals. In this regard, the international community will need to look at financing to unlock all possible sources in support of sustainable development and to revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development for the benefit of all countries.

B. Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

17. In paragraph 248 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government called for the establishment of an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals and, in this regard, mandated the constitution of an

open working group. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals was tasked with submitting a report to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action.

18. The Open Working Group held a total of 13 sessions.[2] At its first session, on 14 and 15 March 2013, the Open Working Group elected its Co-Chairs, adopted its methods of work and conducted a general discussion and an interactive discussion on the sustainable development goals. At its second to eighth sessions, it considered a range of subjects relevant to the formulation of sustainable development goals. It did so through keynote addresses, introductions of issues briefs by the technical support team, panel discussions and interactive exchanges of views, and national statements. At its ninth to thirteenth sessions, it held discussions on a proposal for sustainable development goals. At its thirteenth session, the Open Working Group agreed by acclamation to submit the proposal for sustainable development goals to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session for consideration and appropriate action.

19. The principles of sustainable development are reflected in the set of 17 universal sustainable development goals and 169 targets proposed by the Open Working Group. Taken in their totality, the goals and targets encapsulate a transformative agenda, building on the Millennium Development Goals and incorporating elements relating to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In their statements at the concluding session of the Open Working Group, many Member States said that, while the document was not perfect, it constituted an excellent base for further consideration under the post-2015 development agenda. The prominent role and the valuable contribution of civil society, as well as of the inter-agency technical support team, were also recognized.

20. The General Assembly will give further guidance on the road map for elaborating the agenda.

C. Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing

21. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Heads of State and Government decided to establish an intergovernmental process under the auspices of the General Assembly to assess financing needs, consider the effectiveness, consistency and synergies of existing instruments and frameworks and evaluate additional initiatives, with a view to preparing a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives (resolution 66/288, annex, paras. 255-256).

22. The Committee was established by the General Assembly in its decision 67/559 of 21 June 2013. The five sessions of the Committee were held between August 2013 and August 2014 in New York.

[2] For more information, see http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html.

23. The Committee, co-chaired by Pertti Majanen (Finland) and Mansur Muhtar (Nigeria), organized its work in three clusters: (a) assessment of financing needs, mapping of current flows and emerging trends, and the impact of domestic and international environments; (b) mobilization of resources and their effective use; and (c) institutional arrangements, policy coherence, synergies and governance issues. It drew technical support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations system. Although the sessions of the Committee were restricted to 30 experts, the Committee held broad open consultations with international and regional financial institutions and other stakeholders, including through many outreach meetings in all regions.

24. At its fifth session, on 8 August 2014, the Committee adopted its draft report[3] and entrusted the Co-Chairs, in collaboration with the Secretariat, with forwarding the report to the General Assembly for its consideration.

25. The Committee's report adopts the conceptual framework of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and provides an overview of options for the mobilization of resources from different sources and their effective use in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

D. Options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies

26. With respect to the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the General Assembly on technology facilitation, four workshops were convened by the President of the General Assembly at the sixty-seventh session of the Assembly. Four structured dialogues were held at the sixty-eighth session, guided by the two co-moderators appointed by the President of the General Assembly (Paul Seger (Switzerland) and Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil)). The dialogues drew from the knowledge and perspectives of thinkers and practitioners from academia, research institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as the United Nations system and other international organizations.

27. The structured dialogues allowed participants to better appreciate the range of opinions on the subject and the complexity of issues and to deepen discussions. Convergence was expressed by participants regarding the following actions that could be taken immediately:

- Mapping of technology facilitation initiatives and networks and creation of an information and knowledge-sharing platform thereon.
- Strengthening of synergies and coordination among United Nations entities engaged in technology facilitation (e.g. through a United Nations technology coordination mechanism).
- Possibly, targeted assessments of technology needs of developing countries, with a focus on clean and environmentally sound technologies and taking into account existing assessments.

[3] Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1558.

28. In its resolution 68/210, the General Assembly requested the President of the General Assembly to submit to it at its sixty-eighth session a summary of the discussions and recommendations emerging from the structured dialogues, including on the possible modalities and organization of a technology facilitation mechanism. The present section should thus be read in conjunction with that summary.

29. The fourth dialogue also confirmed a broadly shared resolve that intergovernmental dialogue on options for a technology facilitation mechanism should be continued and deepened at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, during which elements of a mechanism could be proposed.

E. Strengthening the science-policy interface

30. An effective conversation between scientific communities and decision-makers around the world is essential for evidence-based policymaking.

31. One of the functions of the high-level political forum, recognized at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, is to strengthen the science-policy interface and enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels, including through a global sustainable development report that builds on existing assessments. The global sustainable development report and other documentation prepared for the forum should enable it to fulfil this role.

32. At the 2014 session of the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, participants considered the scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report on the basis of a proposal of the Secretary-General reflecting the views of Member States and relevant United Nations entities, including the Committee for Development Policy (E/2014/87).

33. In preparation for the forum, the Secretariat produced a prototype global sustainable development report[4] in order to facilitate the discussion. The report maps existing sustainable development assessments and related processes and highlights the emerging issues identified by scientists. It assesses progress made towards sustainable development; illustrates a range of future pathways towards sustainable development based on the scenario literature; and presents various approaches to measuring progress towards sustainable development. It identifies lessons learned from national, regional and global case studies of the climate-land-energy-water-development nexus regarding the benefits of an integrated approach to policymaking. It also presents illustrative science digests for decision makers.

34. The discussion at the high-level political forum showed broad agreement that the global sustainable development report offered an opportunity to bring together scientific communities, analytical teams of the United Nations system, decision makers and civil society to provide a solid platform between science and policy that supports transformative change at both the global and local levels.

35. The prototype report was well received, and the underlying message sent by many speakers was that the best value that the global sustainable development report could bring was "connecting the dots" across sector assessments. Most speakers pointed to a multi-stakeholder, multi-scale and multi-level approach with links to national processes as an attractive option for future editions of the report.

[4] Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1621.

36. Speakers also pointed out the importance of building knowledge-based societies, expanding human knowledge, improving technologies and making relevant data and dispersed information available in all countries. Therefore, all Member States may want to consider their own national sustainable development reports as part of a global conversation. Capacity-building support will be needed, especially in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries.

37. A number of concrete suggestions were made on the way forward, including the creation of an advisory group on the global sustainable development report, a network of national focal points, and input from the Scientific Advisory Board of the Secretary-General, the Future Earth initiative, the academies of sciences, United Nations entities and regional commissions and regional and national research initiatives.

38. In the ministerial declaration adopted at the high-level political forum for 2014, ministers resolved to strengthen the science-policy interface, including through a global sustainable development report building on existing assessments which could provide a strong evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development, thus contributing to the strengthening of ongoing capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries.

F. Sustainable consumption and production

39. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Governments strengthened their commitment to accelerating the shift towards sustainable consumption and production by adopting the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns. That decision[5] also defined the mandate for the framework and its vision and functions, as well as an initial, non-exhaustive list of five programmes areas.[6] The United Nations Environment Programme, within its current mandate, was requested to serve as secretariat of the framework and was asked to establish a voluntary trust fund to support the implementation thereof.

40. The General Assembly, in its elaboration of the formal and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, decided that the forum could provide recommendations to the board of the framework, as well as to the United Nations Environment Programme, as secretariat, taking into account their reports (resolutions 67/290 and 68/210). In this vein, the high-level political forum for 2014, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, convened two interactive dialogues on sustainable consumption patterns, focusing on the contribution of sustainable consumption patterns to the sustainable development goals and on interaction with the framework's board and secretariat. An interim progress report provided by the board outlined progress made in the implementation of the mandate, including the operationalization of the board, the

[5] The General Assembly, in its resolution 66/288, endorsed the outcome document of the Conference, entitled "The future we want", paragraph 226 of which concerns the framework as elaborated in the annex to the letter dated 18 June 2012 from the representative of Brazil to the Secretary-General of the Conference (A/CONF.216/5).

[6] Consumer information, sustainable lifestyles and education, sustainable public procurement, sustainable buildings and construction, and sustainable tourism, including ecotourism.

secretariat and the trust fund, the nomination of 110 national focal points, the convening of regional meetings and the initiation of several of the initially envisioned programmes. An inter-agency coordination group was established, with the participation of 19 United Nations entities to date.

41. Member States stressed the universality of sustainable consumption patterns, with developed countries taking the lead in the transition to such patterns and developing countries being offered opportunities to "leapfrog". Such a shift, however, continues to require support for technology diffusion, financing and capacity-building.

G. Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States[7]

42. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Member States reaffirmed that small island developing States were a special case for sustainable development and called for the convening of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in 2014. Samoa made a gracious offer to host the Conference, and the General Assembly decided, in its resolutions 67/207 and 68/238, to hold the Conference from 1 to 4 September 2014, to be preceded by activities relating to the Conference.

43. In the above-mentioned resolutions, the General Assembly defined the basic objectives of the Conference as follows: (a) to assess the progress and gaps in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action; (b) to seek renewed political commitment to address the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States; (c) to identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities and ways to address them, including through collaborative partnership; and (d) to identify priorities for the sustainable development of small island developing States in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the theme of the Conference, "The sustainable development of small island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships". It was also decided that the Conference would serve as a forum to build on existing successful partnerships, as well as to launch innovative and concrete new ones, to advance the sustainable development of small island developing States. In this regard, multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues are an official part of the Conference and will have the following themes: sustainable economic development; climate change and disaster risk management; social development in small island developing States, health and non-communicable diseases, and youth and women; sustainable energy; oceans, seas and biodiversity; and water and sanitation, food security and waste management.

44. The preparations are led by the international community, in particular the small island developing States. The secretariat, located in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is led by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs as Secretary-General of the Conference, with the involvement of all the relevant parts of the United Nations system.

[7] See also the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/69/319).

45. In order to conduct the preparatory process, the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference was elected, including the two Co-Chairs, Karen Tan (Singapore) and Phillip Taula (New Zealand).[8] Two Preparatory Committee meetings were held,[9] as was an intersessional meeting,[10] in order to define the outcome of the Conference.

46. The outcome document of the Conference, entitled "Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway)" (A/CONF.223/3) and approved by the Preparatory Committee, consists of a series of actionable points to help small island developing States to achieve sustainable development and address their specific challenges. It addresses the issues of partnerships, financing, trade, capacity-building, technology, data and statistics, and monitoring and accountability, as well as institutional support to small island developing States and their priorities for the post-2015 development agenda.

H. Partnerships and voluntary commitments

47. Partnerships and voluntary commitments for sustainable development are multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and others stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of intergovernmentally agreed development goals and commitments, as included in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Millennium Declaration, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the upcoming post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

48. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, it was duly acknowledged that such voluntary initiatives were complementary to the political outcome. The Secretary-General was invited, in paragraph 283 of the outcome document of the Conference, to establish and maintain a comprehensive registry of voluntary initiatives, which was to be periodically updated, fully transparent and accessible to the public.

49. Pursuant to that request, the United Nations Secretariat launched the Sustainable Development in Action Registry shortly after the Conference. The Registry, which contains detailed descriptions of all registered voluntary initiatives, also facilitates access to other registries and initiatives or "action networks" that promote sustainable development and that have catalysed voluntary commitments around specific themes. These include the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, the United Nations Global Compact, the "Every woman, every child" initiative, the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, the Action Network on Sustainable Transport, and the Action Network on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States, which has emerged in the lead-up to the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

[8] The other members of the Bureau are: Barbados, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, Romania, Seychelles, Spain, Ukraine and Samoa as ex officio member.

[9] The first Preparatory Committee meeting was held from 24 to 26 February 2014 and the final meeting from 23 to 27 June and on 11 July 2014.

[10] The intersessional meeting was held from 21 to 25 April 2014.

50. An enhanced accountability framework for voluntary commitments and partnerships for sustainable development that allows increased transparency and accountability will be an important component of the post-2015 development agenda.

I. Other actions taken by the United Nations system in follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

51. The participants at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for the further mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system and requested the Secretary-General to report, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly on progress made in that regard.

52. The Secretary-General submitted two reports (A/68/79-E/2013/69 and A/69/79-E/2014/66) to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Both the reports and the discussions thereon have shown the accumulated experience of the United Nations system in supporting integrated approaches to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. At the same time, it is recognized that mainstreaming sustainable development remains a complex endeavour that implies rethinking the way that the United Nations conceives its analytical and operational work and its support to intergovernmental processes. Mainstreaming sustainable development in the United Nations system is closely related to equipping the United Nations system to support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Continued efforts and reporting to Member States will thus be essential.

53. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the United Nations system was also tasked with taking an active role in implementing and supporting sustainable development at all levels.

54. In this regard, in August 2012 the Secretary-General wrote to all the United Nations system principals, inviting them to work together to implement the Conference decisions. A matrix[11] showing the allocation of responsibilities for following up on the mandates laid out at the Conference has served to organize United Nations system follow-up. It is also an accountability framework in the system and a working tool to monitor progress. The matrix is being updated regularly to reflect progress and new initiatives.

55. The United Nations system remains engaged in these follow-up processes through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the expanded Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. Ad hoc inter-agency mechanisms were set up to support the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals,[12] as well as the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing,[13] until the conclusion of their work in July and August 2014, respectively. The technical support team which assisted the Open Working Group piloted new ways of

[11] Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/unsystem.html.

[12] See http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549.

[13] See http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1558.

working together for the United Nations system. Its experience will be built upon as the United Nations system gears up to support the high-level political forum.

III. Coherence and coordination of the follow-up processes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and the role of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

56. The present section reviews how the different tracks of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development come together in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and explores how the high-level political forum on sustainable development can fully support this agenda.

57. The contours of the post-2015 development agenda are emerging: sustainable development and poverty eradication are now firmly recognized as its overarching objectives.[14] The forthcoming synthesis report of the Secretary-General will provide a base for the intergovernmental negotiations which will be starting at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The report will provide a consolidated analysis of the inputs of the many processes that are contributing to the post-2015 development agenda, including those related to the sustainable development goals, the financing strategy for sustainable development and options for a technology facilitation mechanism.

58. The agenda is expected to be adopted at a summit to be held in September 2015, the precise modalities of which are being determined by the General Assembly.

59. The period until the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in September 2015 is a transition period. It should be used by Member States to fine-tune the design of the various roles and functions of the high-level political forum which will have a critical role in promoting and reviewing the implementation of the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, in the context of the United Nations institutional framework for sustainable development. By 2016, all of the functions of the forum should be exercised to their full extent.

60. In so doing, it is important to consider possible synergies among the various functions that Member States defined for the forum as the high-level United Nations platform dedicated to sustainable development. As outlined in paragraph 85 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and in General Assembly resolution 67/290, the forum was tasked with numerous roles, which should be considered in conjunction with one another in order to optimize the forum's role to serve the post-2015 development agenda.

61. Section II of the present report attests that the high-level political forum for 2014, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, was

[14] See, for example, the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (General Assembly resolution 68/6) and the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2014 session of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Council (E/HLS/2014/1).

successful and useful to Member States. Future sessions of the forum could benefit from a sharp focus on its mandated functions. Those include giving guidance and recommendations for sustainable development and considering new and emerging sustainable development challenges; following up and reviewing progress in the implementation of all the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation; promoting the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development; increasing transparency and strengthening participation; strengthening the science-policy interface; and promoting United Nations system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

Agenda-setting and guidance

62. The high-level political forum, together with a revitalized General Assembly and a strengthened Economic and Social Council, has shown its potential to support strengthened governance for sustainable development at the international level.

63. The 2014 meeting showed how the forum can fulfil its agenda-setting functions set out at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. This was done through its discussions on future pathways, international cooperation, integrated decision-making, means of implementation, national and regional perspectives, strengthening the science-policy interface, and sustainable consumption and production. The global sustainable development report appeared to be a key instrument to help the forum to draw international attention to trends, issues and policy approaches, as well as to the long-term implications of today's actions. The programme of the high-level political forum should give adequate space for discussing such new issues and perspectives and for looking at the long-term future.

64. The forum, by addressing various issues and providing a dedicated space to reflect on regional perspectives and countries in special situations, has been shown to be an integrative platform well suited to tracking the post-2015 development agenda. It has shown that it can establish a linkage between the national, regional and international levels in order to address common challenges in a synergistic and coherent manner.

Enhancing the integration of the three dimensions

65. The forum has demonstrated how the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development can be translated in practice in a manner relevant for policymaking. This integrative approach will be instrumental for the future review and monitoring of sustainable development goals within the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

66. Integration will also need to be replicated at the national and regional levels by mainstreaming sustainable development in national and regional development policies in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

67. Balanced participation reflecting expertise from economic, social and environmental backgrounds was a key factor in the success of the forum for 2014. Since integration is possibly the most elusive goal of all owing to the many institutional obstacles that it faces at all levels, the challenge going forward will be

to maintain and deepen the cross-fertilization that balanced participation enables. This confirms a similar conclusion from the examination of the functioning of the Commission on Sustainable Development (see A/67/757).

Follow-up and review of progress in implementation

68. One of the pivotal functions of the high-level political forum in the context of the post-2015 development agenda will be monitoring and reviewing progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives. This encompasses both the sustainable development goals and the outcomes of relevant United Nations summits and conferences in the economic, social and environmental areas.

69. The prototype global sustainable development report has shown how various approaches can be combined in order to gain broader, long-term perspectives of progress towards sustainable development goals. Such approaches complement shorter-term monitoring approaches that have been used to review progress on the Millennium Development Goals, for example in annual reports.

70. There is still an important gap in capacity in developing countries with respect to developing and implementing systems of sustainable development indicators. This translates into a lack of systematic monitoring and a disconnect between national realities and international work. The forum will have a strong role to play in helping developing countries in this regard, which is also part of its mandate.

71. The forum also has a mandate to review means of implementation relating to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. This is likely to remain a challenging task, as the needs, requirements and commitments identified in Agenda 21 have remained a contentious issue during the 22 years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

72. It will be critical to clarify issues concerning the means of implementation of the sustainable development goals. Proposed goal 17 in the report of the Open Working Group, strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, underlines a range of means of implementation that could support the other goals in a cross-cutting way. More targeted means of implementation are also included in other proposed goals. In the context of Open Working Group discussions, there was an understanding that follow-up and monitoring arrangements for the means of implementation would be considered in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

73. Given the importance of financing issues in the overall discussions on sustainable development, it will be critical for the forum to find a way to enable meaningful discussions and progress in this area. A unified framework for development beyond 2015 would require bringing together the thus far disjointed discussions on, among other things, traditional development financing, climate finance and biodiversity finance. Guiding such discussions would fit the agenda-setting function of the high-level political forum. Thus, the objective would be to provide consistency and coherence to discussions taking place in various thematic forums while respecting their respective mandates.

74. The report of the Intergovernmental Committee on Sustainable Development Financing provides a timely opportunity to re-examine the role of financing for sustainable development in a post-2015 context and to link the financing discussions

for the post-2015 development agenda to the discussions in the context of preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015.

75. The forum can also prove an additional platform in which possible options for a technology facilitation mechanism can be further discussed, with a view to arriving at pragmatic and useful solutions that will benefit all countries, especially developing countries, and can provide recommendations to advance this process.

76. Sustainable development goals are expected to provide the overarching goals and targets for international development cooperation. The forum can also provide a valuable platform in which to advance discussions on the global partnership for development, as well as on monitoring and accountability. With proposed sustainable development goals that are universal and cover a very broad agenda, the requirements in terms of accountability are poised to change significantly for developed and developing countries, the United Nations system and a variety of stakeholders.

77. The architecture for accountability will have to be built from the grass-roots level, where most of the impacts of development will be felt. Strong links should be enabled through the regions to the global level, where specific commitments are made and overseen. Mechanisms for feedback in both directions will be needed, and the regional commissions and their coordinating mechanisms will have an important role to play.

Promoting system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies

78. Another important dimension of the forum is a regional one, which is anchored in strong General Assembly mandates.[15] The regional dimension was very much present in the discussions of the forum in 2014 and needs to be explored further. In particular, this requires strengthening regional preparatory meetings for the forum as part of an overall robust preparatory process.

79. The regional preparatory sessions for the forum will have to build on the experience gained and gaps identified during the preparation for the 2014 meeting. In particular, the organizational agreements reached by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic Commission for Africa for the holding of regional preparatory sessions, building on existing forums/meetings and avoiding duplication, were valuable steps to integrate the regional commissions into the global preparations for the high-level political forum. On the other hand, regional meetings were held late owing to the late decision on the theme of the forum and did not influence the global discussions as much as intended.

[15] In its resolution 67/290, the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and invited the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

Promoting the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development

80. During the transition period, there needs to be a discussion on how best to prepare the forum for conducting reviews that will replace the national voluntary presentations held in the context of the Council starting in 2016. While paragraph 8 of resolution 67/290 provides some guidance for such reviews, more discussions are needed in order to develop an acceptable methodology and guidelines that have the full ownership of Member States and relevant actors. The reviews should add value to the implementation of sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda without overburdening countries. With support from the international community, they should help countries to assess their sustainable development strategies. Under the theme "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum after 2015", the 2015 meeting of the forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, can further discussions in this area. It can allow an exchange of views and provide guidance and recommendations on the best way to design the reviews while taking into account the different circumstances and stages of development of each country.

81. In preparation for the reviews, consultations on regional-level accountability frameworks are being held. The consultations also build on the lessons of existing regional-level voluntary accountability mechanisms, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism and the Pacific Island peer reviews.

82. As a lesson learned from other review processes, it is important to provide capacity-building for countries to prepare submissions based on national reviews of the implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

Improving cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system on sustainable development programmes and policies

83. In its resolution 67/290, the General Assembly decided that the high-level political forum should review implementation by the United Nations system. It is important to discuss how the system will be reviewed within this mandate. Lessons can be drawn from existing review processes, notably the ongoing peer reviews among United Nations system organizations regarding their environmental footprint.

Strengthening the science-policy interface

84. As discussed previously, enhancing the science-policy interface is one of the main functions of the forum and links to the other functions of agenda-setting and reviews, as well as identifying new and emerging issues.

85. As the prototype global sustainable development report has shown, strengthening the science-policy interface is a complex task. It is resource-intensive, involving the analysis of hundreds of sectoral assessments and collaboration with many agencies of the United Nations system, multiple scientific communities and policymakers, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Increasing the role of major groups and other stakeholders and partnerships

86. An important challenge for the forum will be to sustain and deepen the engagement of major groups and other stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290, in which the General Assembly called for the enhanced involvement of major

groups and other stakeholders as partners and participants in the forum and its related processes.

87. Another dimension of the forum's work will be to define how it relates to voluntary multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments. The place of such commitments in the institutional framework for sustainable development remains to be fully developed. Important issues include the status of such commitments vis-à-vis more traditional types of intergovernmental commitment, their monitoring and the accountability of those who made them.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

88. The present report highlights that the high-level political forum, at its 2014 meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, has proved its potential to fulfil the mandates emanating from the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and General Assembly resolution 67/290. It has proved capable of helping to set the agenda of the entire United Nations system and the international community in relation to sustainable development. It also showed its potential to keep the implementation of sustainable development commitments under review. As stated by many Member States, the forum will be the main platform for reviewing and monitoring sustainable development goals in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, ensuring coherence and coordination and advancing poverty eradication and sustainable development as the main objective of the post-2015 development agenda.

89. The General Assembly may therefore consider calling upon relevant actors, including Governments; organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions; other relevant intergovernmental organizations, including the World Trade Organization; major groups; and other relevant stakeholders:

(a) To fully engage in and support the work of the high-level political forum as it prepares to deliver fully on its role to review sustainable development goals in the context of the post-2015 development agenda starting in 2016;

(b) To fully implement relevant resolutions and enhance the high-level political forum as a dedicated platform for leadership and implementation of sustainable development commitments, recalling that the forum should maintain a strong focus on implementation at all levels and review progress in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and all the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation;

(c) To ensure that the high-level political forum maintains a focused, relevant and flexible agenda that can address in a timely manner both the ongoing review of progress and new and emerging issues pertinent to the attainment of sustainable development;

(d) To ensure that the forum follows up on the processes launched at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and brings cohesion and complementarity among them, especially in the context of the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;

(e) To enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development by simultaneously engaging with the economic, social and environmental policymaking communities and other communities of practice on a continuous basis;

(f) To initiate discussions expeditiously on the possible scope and methodology of the reviews of implementation mandated to be conducted by the forum starting in 2016;

(g) To propose possible themes and areas, including new and emerging issues, for discussion at the high-level political forum;

(h) To further strengthen the science-policy interface at the high-level political forum, including through the global sustainable development report, while also enhancing their own evidence-based decision-making;

(i) To maintain a robust process to prepare the high-level political forum at all levels, with the full involvement of the regional commissions and the support of a stronger United Nations inter-agency process;

(j) To follow up, encourage and strengthen partnerships, initiatives and voluntary commitments on sustainable development while ensuring greater review and accountability through the high-level political forum;

(k) To enhance and ensure the meaningful engagement of major groups and other relevant stakeholders in the high-level political forum and national sustainable development processes;

(l) To use the high-level political forum itself to determine how best it can deliver on these objectives through the choice of its thematic focus and ensure that the forum policy guidance draws from solid reviews of implementation, as well as scientific and other evidence.

90. The General Assembly could also:

(a) Call upon the United Nations system to make further efforts to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in its work and invite the Secretary-General to continue reporting on further progress in this regard. The high-level political forum could provide detailed guidance on this topic at its 2015 meeting;

(b) Invite the United Nations system to discuss the best ways to conduct reviews of its implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in the context of the forum.